MUTINY

A PAPER OF ANARCHISTIC IDEAS AND ACTION

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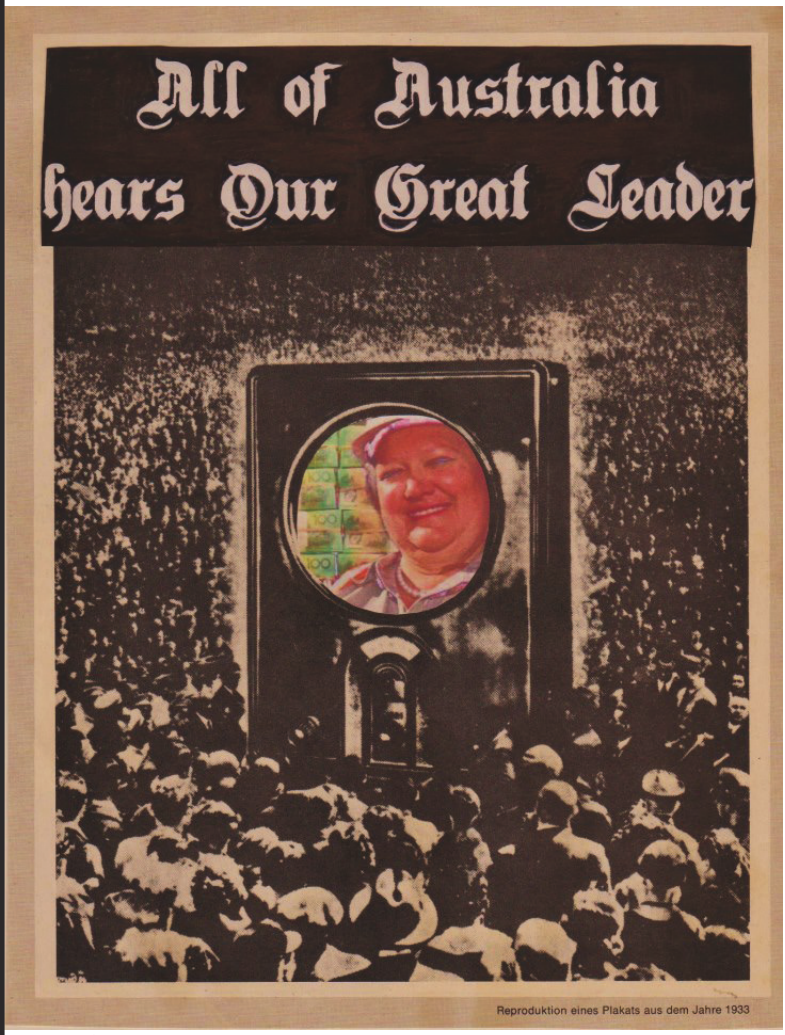

Image 'Gina Rinehart' courtesy of BLANKA, Thanks to John Heartfield

fun fact: if we were to take Gina's wealth and divide it amongst everyone in the world we'd all get $4

Editorial

In the wake of events big and small the zine shows and analyses some of what's happening in the world, from Israel's occupation of Palestine to the alienated experiences of students at universities to the recent Sydney 'riot'. We are inspired by some of these cases (3 million on strike in Indonesia!), and deeply saddened and angered by others - the massacre of striking miners in South Africa, for example. In this issue we want to bring radical analyses of these things to light, and suggest forms of resistance.

As such we hope you'll enjoy an article by James on the problems associated with simply demanding 'more education' in the context of student movements here and overseas. He argues that any emancipation in the university requires a critique of its practices of teaching, learning and research, and suggests that demands could mobilise against testing and for a liberation from grading. We interview folks from Israel, Melbourne and South Africa. Matt situates the recent 'riot' in central Sydney within the broader context of racism and violence in Australia, exploring the logic of the media coverage, the use of 'Aussie values' as a tool of power and the role of Howard-era polices and rhetoric. Princess Mob and Sourdough have a conversation about the riot focusing more on the response of the far left. They look at questions like what solidarity means in these circumstances and the extent to which the content of a protest should determine how it is assessed.

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BRIEF NEWS

SYDNEY
In the weeks preceding the NSW council elections, some anarchists and anti authoritarians in Sydney mounted a campaign against the coerced ritual of voting.

A couple thousand posters and stickers were pasted up, mostly throughout the electorates of Ashfield, Leichardt, Marrickville, Rockdale, Hurstville and Sydney city. Low lying politician signs from every party were torn down, numerous high ones were hit with paint bombs and at least 20 anti voting slogans were sprayed across walls, mostly throughout the inner west.

In the days before the election a number of pre-poll party tables of various parties were raided of all available propaganda... A banner was also dropped from the Hathem St bridge over Parramatta Rd in Lewisham, reading "VOTE FOR NOBODY".

They say: "We will not accept the authority or mandate of any politician, we will not petition or lobby these scumbags for scraps or concessions. We seek the complete liberation of our mutual desires, the destruction of all hierarchy and the establishment of libertarian communes in harmony with the native environment. These options are not available on any ballot paper and we encourage widespread disruption and sabotage of these enforced spectacles of 'democracy'."

Also in Sydney on 1st September, *some feminists* disrupted the NSW 'Right to Life' Conference, and threw a pink ballet flat at notorious anti-choice bigot David Bereit. See fcollective.wordpress.com.

INDONESIA
Close to three million factory workers in Indonesia joined a one-day strike on October 3. A joint statement issued by several labour unions said a total of 80 industrial estates in 24 cities were impacted by the work stoppage. The biggest demonstration took place in Jakarta, where more than 700 companies were closed down.

Police deployed 11,000 officers and 4,000 military personnel to monitor protests in the city, and to "secure" rallies planned outside the Manpower Ministry, the State Palace and the House of Representatives.

Said Iqbal, president of the Confederation of Indonesian Workers Union, said the workers want the government to stop outsourcing, which allows companies to terminate working contracts without compensation, by 15 October. An earlier deadline to review the outsourcing and cheap labour laws has not been met.

Another labor representative said workers wanted the minimum wage increased. He said the situation was particularly tense since the Health Ministry issued a recommendation that workers share the cost of health insurance premiums with their employers. "Our life has been miserable with the low wage, so why should we share payment of the premium? The companies must fully pay the premium."

PHILLIPINES

25 September: More than a dozen people were injured in Manila as riot police moved-in to clear a squatter settlement in an old Philippines Government compound. Families had refused to move as they had been offered relocation to an area more than 70 kilometres from Manila where there was little chance of finding employment.

Volleys of rocks, bottles and Molotov cocktails just delayed the inevitable, earning retaliation from water cannon and tear gas. Several people were arrested and people on both side of the battle lines suffered injuries.

About 250 families had lived in the abandoned government compound in Makati, just a few kilometres away from the central business district.

The slum will be replaced by a multi-storey government office building. More than two million people in Metro Manila, or roughly one fifth of the sprawling city's population, live in shanty towns as so-called informal settlers.

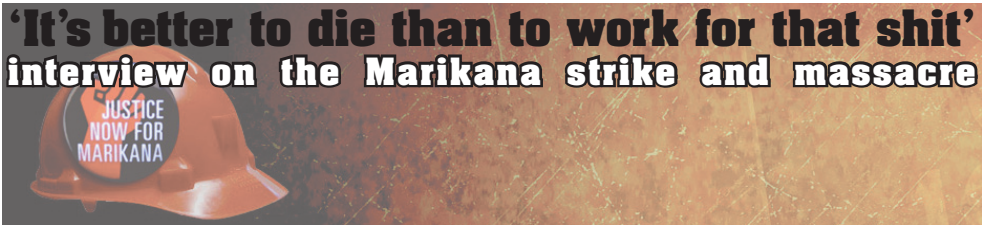
ATHENS

On September 29th in the first mass strike to hit the streets of Athens since before the summer, 100,000 people demonstrated against the next harsh rain of cuts. Clashes took place around Syntagma square and after in Exarchia. In the evening, the Acropolis police station was attacked and seven vehicles were set on fire — one police patrol car, one undercover police car, four motorbikes (three of them police) and two cars that had been confiscated by police.

On the 30th, antifascists clashed with Nazis in central Athens, and police came immediately to help the neo-Nazis, arresting 5 antifascists. The antifacist action was taken in the wake of a neo-Nazi attack on a Tanzanian social centre a few days earlier.

On October 4th, workers at the Skaramangas shipyard stormed the ministry of defense. The workers were protesting the fact that they have not been paid their last 6 month's wages. They quickly gathered around the hellenic army general staff HQ, soon thereafter clashing with riot police sent to quell the demo. At least 120 detentions of workers were reported and the tension continued outside the police HQ on Alexandras Ave (where anti-fascists were still held following arrests earlier - at time of print, all prisoners from the antifacist action had been released on bail).

News taken from disaccords.wordpress.com and blog.occupiedlondoon.org



Mutiny Zine recently interviewed Jonathan, international secretary of the Zabalaza Anarchist Communist Front (ZACF), about the police massacre of workers who were on strike at the Lonmin company’s mines in Marikana in South Africa. For information about ZACF, see http://zabalaza.net/

Mutiny: Can you give us some background to the strike at Marikana – how long has it been going on for, what are the strikers’ demands, what are the conditions like in the mines? Is this all related to the state of the mining industry in South Africa as a whole?

The Marikana strike began on 10 August 2012 when 3 000 rock drillers initiated a wildcat strike to demand a pay increase from in the region of R4 000 to R12 500 a month (the top three managers at Lonmin earned R44.6 million in one year). This, however, should not be seen as an isolated incident – strikes, often wildcat ones, in pursuit of higher salaries and better conditions have been ongoing across South Africa’s platinum belt.

Conditions on the mines are so bad that even the Minister of Trade and Industry has described them as “appalling”. Not only are workers subjected to extreme exploitation, but they often also suffer oppression and domination at the hands of mine management, foremen, supervisors and security. This is particularly true for black mine workers. High levels of security at the mines mean that workers are constantly under surveillance by security guards and CCTV cameras, are subjected to iris scans on entering the premises and humiliating body searches on leaving.

In addition to the oppression and domination that mineworkers routinely face, working conditions on the mines are very dangerous and unhealthy. The heavy equipment operated by mineworkers hundreds of metres underground, in hot and cramped conditions, results in many workers’ hearing being permanently damaged. Workers also often suffer from skin problems caused by the industrial water, sometimes from reduction works, used for cooling and many mineworkers develop silicosis from inhaling rock dust caused by drilling. In order to supplement their basic incomes, many mineworkers are compelled to take risks, which often lead to accidents, such as working unsafely and extremely long hours in order to try and get production bonuses – which make up an important part of many mineworkers’ incomes.

So, as these conditions of exploitation, oppression and domination, coupled with the extremely hazardous working conditions miners face are typical across the sector, I think it would be safe to say that the Marikana Lonmin strike is “related to the state of

the mining industry in South Africa as a whole", although we must remember that the strike itself arose around specific demands by the rock drillers for pay increases, and was not linked to struggles at other mines – although miners from Marikana did later seek to establish links of solidarity with workers at neighbouring mines.

Mutiny: From reading reports of what happened, there seems to be evidence that the massacre was actually premeditated to some degree by people a fair way up the police chain of command; as the cops weren't just armed with live ammunition but had also erected a razor-wire fence in such a way that it forced strikers to move towards police lines when they had to retreat from water cannons and tear gas. Is it likely that at least some level of violence was planned in advance? Beyond the police, what was the role of the African National Congress (ANC), the ruling party, in the bloodshed? The statement on the massacre at the Zabalaza website (http://zabalaza.net/2012/08/19/anc-throws-off-its-mask-workers-murdered/#more-3180) also condemns the ANC youth league and figures like Julius Malema (the former ANC youth league president, now expelled from the ANC) who have publically criticised the police – can you elaborate on this?

The South African Police Service (SAPS) is generally regarded as being ill-trained when it comes to crowd control, but this cannot account for the August 16th massacre of 34 striking mineworkers – some of whom, it later transpired, were shot in the back while trying to flee, others hunted down and executed as they took refuge in a nearby boulder field.

Given that the police had stated on the day of the massacre that it was "D-day" for the strike, and that the SAPS' elite Special Task Force was deployed, I think it seems fairly clear that a decision had been taken to break the strike and to protect the bosses' economic interests and private property using any means necessary. On the 13th of August a delegation of workers from Marikana were sent to Lonmin's neighbouring operation at Karee mine to try and convince workers there to come out on strike as well. On their return the delegation was shot at by the police, leaving two workers dead. The workers attempted to defend themselves, resulting in the death of two policemen. Whether or not the level of violence was planned in advance, or was simply a reaction by the police to the killing of their colleagues days earlier, police certainly did not dither in using excessive force, and showed no remorse afterwards.

A number of high-ranking ANC officials and ANC linked families, such as the Mandelas, Thambos, Zumas etc., also have extensive economic interests in platinum mining companies. Cyril Ramaphosa (a former NUM leader), for example, not only sits on the board and owns shares in Lonmin, but has interests in a number of other companies to which various functions at Marikana are outsourced. Given this, and the climate of ongoing wildcat strikes and sit-ins across the sector over recent years, it doesn't seem implausible that a decision may have been taken to make an example of the striking Marikana mineworkers in order to intimidate workers and deter them from taking future actions in order to protect the economic interests of an ANC elite.

The ANCYL and Julius Malema, for their part, have opportunistically used the incident to publicly criticise the police and current ANC leadership in order to garner support among workers, try to oust Jacob Zuma from the presidency and have Malema reinstated, as well as to build support for their demand to have the mines nationalised; supposedly so that mineworkers and communities surrounding the mines can have a fairer share in the wealth produced by the mines, but more honestly as a way to amass their own wealth and power through the positions they desire for themselves in the state.

Mutiny: A few of the mainstream media reports I've read have emphasised the clash between two unions, the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) and the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU), as a cause of violence. Has this been an important factor or is it mostly a media beat-up to deflect attention from the violence of the South African state? Have the unions, especially the NUM, been guilty of collaboration with the bosses – if so can you explain how this has been happening? Are the AMCU much better?

Across the sector in general, many of the workers that have undertaken wildcat strikes and sit-ins have been contract workers, or those hired through labour brokers – who sometimes fall outside NUM, which focuses on permanently employed and generally skilled workers – who have felt that their interests have not been properly represented by the deals struck by NUM officials. As such, NUM has been losing membership to AMCU and so it is possible that at least some of the initial violence was fuelled by recruitment related rivalry; in the events leading up to the massacre it was reported that three workers were shot dead by men wearing NUM t-shirts, although it is not clear whether the gunmen were actually NUM members or just hired to do the job in order to incite union rivalry and divide workers. It should be noted, however, that the strike at Marikana was largely self-organised and involved non-unionised workers as well as both NUM and AMCU members.

The focus on union rivalry and clashes between workers has largely been used to deflect attention both from the very real and legitimate demands of the workers and the fact that the strike was largely self-managed, falling outside of the control of officials from both unions, as well perhaps as to reinforce the image of the police as "upholders of the peace" instead of violent defenders of property and profit.

Given the corporatist nature of the NUM – and Cosatu (the Congress of South African Trade Unions – eds) generally – since 1994, the very existence and maintenance of a bureaucratic layer of officials lies in collaborating with the bosses. The long-term agreements NUM officials typically negotiate tie workers to fixed wages for long periods, leaving dissatisfied workers little recourse but to illegal wildcat strikes and sit-ins. NUM officials have also criticised workers involved in wildcat strikes, which fall outside of the legal framework and formalised collective bargaining – where the officials' interests lie – and have gone as far as calling for striking workers to return to work, be fired or arrested.

I would like to stress though that we do not see the NUM itself as the problem and stand with it against the bosses. The NUM has won massive victories for workers over the

years, playing a decisive role in breaking the classical apartheid mining system. Without the NUM conditions would be far, far worse. Yet we also realise NUM is increasingly under the control of highly paid officials, very few of whom still work as miners. So, we also stress the need for NUM members to enforce workers' control over the union, and to pull the union back in line with the interests of the workers – which necessarily includes questioning the Alliance with the ANC, which is openly allied to the mining bosses.

AMCU might be a bit better than NUM, given that it is independent of the ANC and SACP, but it certainly isn't a rank-and-file worker controlled union, and union legality and the interests of its own bureaucracy prevent it from supporting self-managed direct action by workers in the form of wildcat strikes and sit-ins.

Mutiny: What are the most recent developments in the strike? I've read that the police have been torturing strikers they have arrested? On August 20 the *Mail and Guardian* newspaper quoted a miner saying 'It's better to die than to work for that shit … I am not going to stop striking. We are going to protest until we get what we want. They have said nothing to us. Police can try and kill us but we won't move." Is this type of attitude widespread or have many workers been intimidated? Has there been much solidarity from other social movements in South Africa?

Striking miners at Marikana accepted a management pay rise offer of up to 22% – a partial victory, although this is still topped up with productivity bonuses – and went back to work on Thursday the 20th of August; but unrest and industrial action has spread across the mining sector since rock drillers initiated the wildcat strike at Marikana six weeks ago. 190 of the 260 mineworkers arrested at Marikana were reportedly tortured and it is possible that this, coupled with the difficulty of sustaining a strike without strike funds, while living in poverty-level conditions, contributed to the workers accepting an offer less than their original demand.

Similar attitudes to that above are now being expressed by strikers at other mines, but it remains to be seen as to whether or not they will be able to hold out and sustain their struggles until victory.

Since the massacre there have been a number of pickets and solidarity demonstrations around the country. The Marikana Solidarity Campaign (http://marikana.info) was initiated and a solidarity fund has been established. Due to limited capacity and our own strategic focus we in ZACF, however, have not participated actively in this campaign, and I therefore cannot comment accurately as to the composition and orientation thereof.

Mutiny: Could you tell us about other examples of state violence against labour and social movements in South Africa? Is there a danger of treating the massacre as an extreme, isolated incident and ignoring these other instances of state violence, as well as the broader reality of capitalism in South Africa?

Police in post-apartheid South Africa routinely use rubber bullets, tear gas, stun grenades, armoured vehicles and helicopters against striking workers and community protestors. Before Marikana, at least 25 striking workers, protestors and children were killed by state and private forces of repression in South Africa. One of the most well-known cases, simply because it was dramatically caught on video and broadcast nationwide, was that of 33-year-old Andries Tatane; beaten and then shot by police during a service delivery protest in Ficksburg in 2011. In 2009 five striking South African Municipal Workers Union members were shot and injured and, also in 2009, at least three people were killed during a widespread strike in the platinum sector, with another three more killed on the 1st of August 2012, and 20 wounded at the Aquarius Kroondal Mine.

Although Marikana has been the most lethal use of force against civilians by the force of repression in South African since the 1960 Sharpeville Massacre and the end of apartheid, it is by no means an isolated incident and it would be very dangerous to view it as such. Although many rightfully recognise the role the police and state play in defending the economic interests of investors in the mining and other sectors, the position commonly held – including by many on the left – that the state is a neutral entity, and that police violence is a result of poor training and incorrect leadership is entirely ruinous to the cause of workers' and popular emancipation. This view fails to recognise the central role the state and its armed wings play in maintaining capitalism and defending private property and the economic interests of the ruling elite; the alternative posed thus usually being state-centric and centred on the notion that the capture of state power by a workers' party or revolutionary vanguard – or simply the replacement of a few rotten apples at the top – can remould the state into an institution that can be used to serve the interests of the popular classes, and even as a tool in their struggle for emancipation. This, of course, reinforces dependency and expectations of salvation from above, instead of encouraging independence and working class self-confidence to achieve its own liberation.

Mutiny: Do you have any final comments?

Not really – just to thank Mutiny for the opportunity to air our views and to direct readers interested in a more in-depth analysis of Marikana and struggles in the platinum sector to the ZACF's Shawn Hattingh's article "***What the Marikana Massacre tells us***" (http://zabalaza.net/2012/09/11/what-the-marikana-massacre-tells-us/), from which the response to this interview has drawn heavily.

RIOT

A conversation on the recent "riot" in Sydney.

What follows is a dialogue between two people commenting on the Sydney 'riot' - eds

Sourdough: My first response on seeing the Sydney 'riots' reported on the news was "wow!" - I hadn't known anything was happening in town that day and suddenly there's this rowdy demo fighting with cops. And it's a crowd with a large proportion of young brown men , so it's also pretty clear from the outset that they are necessarily resisting aggressive, racialised policing. And of course the liberal left line-up with the an entire array of conservatives to denounce 'violent protesters'. But it didn't take long for a sinking feeling to hit, a feeling I've been trying to contemplate in the weeks since.

Princess Mob: I'm not being flippant when I say that 'fuck the police' is a pretty key political starting point.

What does it even mean to 'take sides' in this situation? We're clearly not going to join with those who call for the police to make sure things don't get out of control again, nor those who
call on 'moderate Muslims' to distance themselves from 'extremists' (precisely because we don't see the 'extremists' as representing anyone but themselves).
Nor will we join with the explicit racists blathering on about deporting people, or the liberal racists saying 'this is the kind of thing that makes people think that racists are right.'

But also, we wouldn't join in further demonstrations against the film (even if it wasn't clear that such protests would be policed to non-existence). Nor are we really in a position to offer support to those arrested, who are surely going to get fucked by the courts, or offer any other form of material solidarity.

So if we're not going to abstractly 'take sides' as if we're spectators to a sporting event, I guess what we do is look at the event and at the political currents that mobilised around it: at least those that are mobilised in arenas we can see – the mainstream press and the far-left.

On that, I think it's notable that Socialist Alternative released a statement in support of the protesters, against the police violence, and against the widespread public condemnation of 'violent extremists.' As much as I hate SAlt, I actually think this was a good thing they did, and the statement's not even that bad. But it's also interesting to contrast it with the statement the same organisation released six years ago, after a group of people smashed a police van and fought with police at an anti-G20 demo in Melbourne. On that occasion, the position of SAlt was to condemn those protesters, blame them for inciting police repression, and call on the rest of the left to 'isolate' them.

What's the difference for SAlt between the G20 protesters – who had a lot more in common with them politically – and the recent demonstrators in Sydney? It's

primarily that SAlt seems to consider these Muslim protesters as authentically representative of the oppressed – and therefore, not to be held to the same standards of behaviour as those who attend a left demo. 'We' must be rational, tactical, and not personally affected by what we're on the streets to express: otherwise 'we' make people like SAlt look bad. It's the same racist double-standard that comes up all the time in debates about non-violence: we can support oppressed brown people in far-off lands who engage in violence, but 'we' should be better than that.

Sourdough: I'm pretty sure there's a common tendency in how the Left responds to moments of social upheaval that it can't claim as its own, and that is to project its own analysis of politics onto not just the situation, but often onto the intentions of those involved. The problem is a tendency to remove agency from anyone in a more 'oppressed' position. This means it can overlook any politics within a particular situation that are problematic, and also then make arguments using a simplistic 'black or white' dichotomy that you're either with the oppressed or you're part of oppressing them.

So basically, in cases when minority/ oppressed/ disadvantaged folk take action, it is assumed that they don't really know how to articulate politics in the right way, leaving the specialists of 'The Left' to decide if there are actually any sort of radical politics at play in a given moment. What's strange is that during the UK riots many of the left felt it was necessary to make a critique that there wasn't a radical politics of change being articulated and therefore the rawness of that moment was problematic. I disagreed then with that analysis, mainly because I don't think what happened across England had anything to do with putting forward a coherent political analysis, certainly not in the form the traditional Left is used to, yet in some of the actions and words of participants there was clearly something very radical being articulated. And in this situation [what happened in Sydney], where there is a certain political/ religious ideology being expressly articulated, it is being overlooked in favour of some other meta-narrative about racism and imperialism, and I'm not meant to take on board what the protesters themselves are saying?

Princess Mob: I would argue that any public political gathering is always about more than its stated political message. It's about a number of people claiming space together: either through permits and negotiations, or directly by taking it. And in Sydney, for the past however many years, it often involves being denied space by the police and/or fighting them for it and/or overspilling in some minor way the tiny space 'allowed' to you. There's also the specific history of demonstrations in Sydney over the last ten years that have involved crowds of people 'of middle Eastern appearance' – the Books not Bombs protests in 2003, and the protests against the bombing of Lebanon. These demos in particular were policed brutally, and what happened the other week takes place in that context.

But paying attention to the politics of the *form* of a demonstration doesn't mean that we can just ignore the specific *content*. I think the key question we're grappling with is: how do we talk about the fact that a demonstration can have meaning that spills over from its stated politics, without just overwriting it with what we *want* it to say. Whether that's 'anti-war' or 'anti-imperialist' or 'anti-racist' politics or an (anti-political) rebellion against police. Or, maybe, how is it possible to find or express common ground with people without expecting them to be pure but also without pretending that what they explicitly say 'really' means something else?

Sourdough: Obviously the Sydney riots presents a number of difficult questions beyond this. Racism towards Muslims is both institutionalised and a part of the everyday in Australia and this protest was all about

those things at the same time as it was about any affirmation of religious identity. But if we do actually respect people's autonomy (incidentally, the 'we' here isn't referring to the 'Left' at all, as the authoritarian socialists and dogmatic liberals that comprise it clearly have no respect for autonomy) then we must respect people's capacity to articulate resistance to the conditions they face in the way they choose. It is a narrow view to assume this protest could have only been about responding to rising Islamophobia and to American imperialism in the middle-east and that there couldn't have been an actual constitutive element to its organisation. That is, there was something being fought for and not just against, and what that for is, is something I want to be able to consider in terms of offering solidarity.

Choosing to not expressly be in solidarity with these protesters could be seen as choosing to be on the side of the state, not to mention the boring, reactionary, atheist liberals.

Princess Mob: Really, fuck capital-A Atheists. I mean, after all the outcry, look who turned up to the tiny protest at Melbourne Town Hall the next week [in opposition to the original protests]: the far-right and atheists.

Sourdough: And hell, if I had to choose sides I'd choose the side of those causing a ruckus in the city because of the conditions they face. But I don't buy the 'you're either with us or against us' line. And I don't want to support authoritarian religious movements because, I know the reactionary, conservative role they play against progressive, let alone revolutionary, social change. And to be a bit blasé, and even more risk being a bit too close to those liberal atheists, I really have little interest in folk getting all agitated because someone insults their religious icons. I don't say this to follow some 'freedom of speech' argument, but simply to say I reckon people who are going to take such offence at things like this really need to drink a cup of concrete...

Princess Mob: Yeah, but you know it's not as simple as 'one guy in the USA made a film that said something mean, then people went crazy!!!.' The anti-Americanism of the demo surely has a lot to do with the ongoing wars/occupations the USA is engaged in; the sensitivity to attacks on Islam surely has a lot to do with Islamophobia that goes along with the war on terror, and anti-Arab racism in Australia. And that's besides the fact that the film maker *set out* to offend Muslims.

But, like you say above, it's pretty condescending to act as if the politics expressed at the demo, and the specific construction of a politicised religious identity, is simply a reaction to oppression made without choice or any positive force. To make what might be a poor analogy, it's like saying that a woman's feminism is simply due to whatever she's personally suffered from men rather than being a complex political philosophy.

Sourdough: Take Palestine – a great degree of resistance to imperialism there is organised through Hamas (an authoritarian Islamist organisation), and it does make sense to me that many folk there would be drawn to the organisation that, not only forcefully resists the occupation, but organises 'social programs' much in the style of the Black Panthers. However, there is also a great current of secular left revolutionary groups fighting occupation in Palestine, and that they are not at the forefront of struggle now does involve Hamas playing a role in their suppression. All this might seem off-topic but I do think the Left's history is filled with terrible choices of supporting the wrong thing. This is particularly pertinent in regards to anti-colonial struggles around the world where people were corralled into supporting 'the oppressed' which in reality of meant supporting brutal, corrupt, authoritarian regimes. Mostly I just think we can afford to be a bit nuanced about these things and reject a simple 'with us or against us' position.

Colouring inside the thin blue line: media and Sydney's Muslim protests

In a tweet published on Sunday 16 September, Mariam Veiszadeh stated: "AUS Muslim Women's Assoc: No doubt wider Australian public are anxious & uncomfortable about views expressed by some protestors". On reading this I was struck by how curious it was that someone who is both a refugee and outspoken representative of the Muslim community would invoke a mirror image of John Howard's 'relaxed and comfortable' rhetoric. It was through this phrase, for instance, that Howard shared his view that the history of relations between Aboriginal people, white authorities, and other immigrants to Australia was a largely positive story. Ironically however, it was Howard himself who stoked the embers of Australia's racial anxiety into new forms of Islamaphobia and refugee bashing. In approaching this topic I am mindful of many difficulties, not least of which is that I don't wish to support any variety of religious authoritarianism. While I will defer the much needed elaboration of this point to other writers, I do remain conscious of it. My focus here, however, is on questioning the context of Veiszadeh's small statement, which, I think, can reveal something about the nature of racism and violence in Australia.

Before getting started though, a word on my position is warranted. As someone who is white, non-Muslim, and born in Australia, I speak from somewhere near a pinnacle of privilege that provides fertile ground for ignorance. In my day-to-day I am rarely forced to deal with the consequences of looking like I do or experience the interpretation of my skin colour. I don't know what it is like to be a Muslim living in a country ordinarily pervaded with prejudice, let alone at a moment when the media-state alliance has you fixed in its demanding spotlight. I acknowledge that work like that of Veiszadeh will help to abate some of the throwback from the coverage of the 'Sydney Riots'. Criticising Veiszadeh for trying to protect her community amidst the complexities of Australian racism and the internal politics of Islam would be similar to the patronising position taken by many other commentators. My questioning therefore is not along the lines of 'what is wrong with Veiszadeh's statement', but rather how are Australian Muslims, or any other racialised group, put in a position where they are expected to soothe Australia's racial paranoia rather than resist and dismantle it.

Also a quick word on terminology. When I talk about 'race' I take it to be a social construct formed by the material effect of power. Examples would include the different ways in which colonial powers treated and thought about African American and Indigenous peoples. 'Slave races' were a reproducible source of labour, meaning that one drop of 'African blood' could be enough to designate you as Black. Indigenous people on the other had were an impediment to land ownership, thus it was thought possible to breed them out of existence. In Australia, being 'half cast' was sometimes enough for authorities to declare someone an 'able bodied' European. Conceptions of race therefore do exist and do produce effects, but they are not based in factual or empirical distinctions, and they are not tied to anything neutral or stable. As the history of race relations shows, (for instance, in Australia, various waves of Irish, Greek, Italian migrants have progressively become as 'white' as the original British authorities) conceptions of race and racial affiliation change when social conditions change. Therefore, I use the term 'racialised' to invoke the idea that racial identification is something that is created through social relations. When I use 'white' I am referring to a racial class that is only coherent to the extent that it has maintained itself as the dominant power in Australia. By talking about Muslims in the context of race I don't mean to imply that 'Muslim' is a race. Rather, I am suggesting that within Australia, Muslims do contend with a system of racialisation that uses religion as one of various ways (including appearance, language, comportment and geography) to code and profit from racial difference.

Regrettably then, let's return to Howard. In a paper on patriarchal white sovereignty, Aileen Moreton-Robinson nicely dissects the racism inherent to Howard's vision of Australiai. 'Relaxed and comfortable' was Howard's move to validate the grumblings of people disaffected by the previous government's policies on multiculturalism and Aboriginal rights. Such a phrase gave voice to the concern that white privilege was losing ground to the undeserving through the allocation of state controlled resources, changing views on the nation's historical narrative and sense of identity, and an increase in non-white immigration. By suggesting there was little in our history to be concerned about, Howard confirmed the opinions of many that (white) Australia, and the values it held, was something to celebrate and protect rather than change.

Following 9/11, the ground that Howard had won by rallying the white mainstream was put to use in constructing the discursive pattern of Australia's contemporary Islamaphobia. It became common for many Australians to hold the belief, whether suppressed or worn as a badge, that hoards of violent, dark-skinned Muslims wanted to invade 'our' country. This paranoia expressed itself in support for new border policies and the offshoring of refugee detention centres. 'We', the (white) natives, would (again) decide what kinds of people would come to this country. Cue the Cronulla riots and much handwringing about the presence of racial violence in 'our' country.

Howard is not the sole cause of all of this. He was working with conditions laid down over centuries and an international context that precipitated the shift. However, even in the way he celebrated multiculturalism – the ability to appropriate the 'best bits' of other cultures and smooth out the rest – Howard's rhetoric reflected a structural feature of Australian racism. As Moreton-Robinson puts it: "the tolerance extended to migrants is tied to their commitment to the economic and social values of the nation, not their cultural difference". The ideal non-white migrant is therefore someone whose labour is exploitable, and who can add some 'spice' to the Anglo blandness, but otherwise learns to act, look, and speak white. While 'White Australia' is officially dead, many of the privileges it conferred still function through the normative concept of 'Aussie values'. As a mechanism of power 'Aussie values' works by being vague and unstable, and subject to control by groups who determine the particulars of its meaning and to whom it should apply. The (in)tolerant demands of the immigration officer, teacher, students, job interviewer, boss, neighbour, sales assistant, customer, landlord, journalist, police officer, magistrate or electorate, may each be radically different, and yet each in their own way has the power to distinguish an individual or group from the rest of the 'Australian community'.

Honest and hypocritical, the two sides of Australian racism can be observed in the case of the 'Sydney riots'. With few exceptions, coverage of the protest violence emphasised its relation to overseas scenes and overlooked the role of police. The impression was that the Muslims seen in Sydney were one and the same as those involved in killing the US ambassador in Libya. The expressions of outrage suggested that 'these types of people' were exclusively responsible for scenes depicted in Sydney. It gave little heed to the history of anti-Islamic campaigning to demonise and ghettoise Muslims in Australia (no mosques here!), or any non-religious grounds for Muslim disaffection. As Rachel Woodlock, a local Muslim academic, was recently recorded as saying: "Some Muslims in Australia suffering a variety of stressors, eg. high rates of unemployment, discrimination in the job-market, experiences of racism, being marginalised through dog-whistle politics, fall prey to charismatic preachers who offer them maladapted solutions"ii.

It is possible that there were some people attending the Sydney protests who support the violent defence of their particular religious interpretation. I have no interest in supporting this view. I'm also not interested in suggesting that the police were the only ones who were violent. However, these points do not preclude the fact that 1) most if not all of the protesters were there to express their views in a non-violent way, 2) riot police are notorious for overreacting, escalating and perpetrating violence, particularly when they feel they are not in control (something apparent in this case), 3) Muslims in Australia have grounds on which to be angry that are not simply about their religious beliefs, and 4) being physically violent is not always illegal or wrong.

Nevertheless the media went with the story they were geared up to write, whitewashing the complexities of race, religion and violence at play. Most outlets reported the details of violence against police and gave no air to the concept of police escalation or violence. The nature of events preceding footage of scuffles and angry chanting were not articulated. Police accounts were taken at face value. One newspaper described with indignation that up to six arrests were made over the course of several hours, even though this number is remarkably small given the nature of the event. The overall impression was that the Muslim protesters alone were the ones who were deliberately and unreasonably violent.

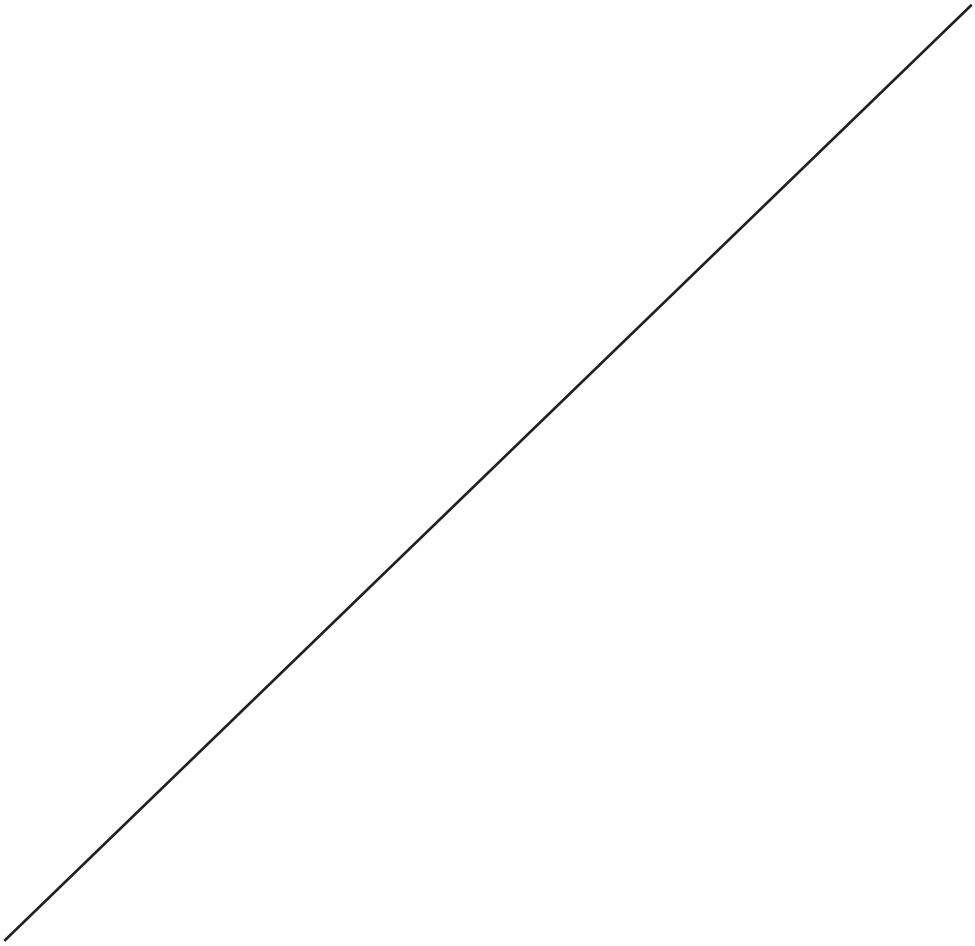
The effect was damaging in a variety of ways. Racists and Islamophobes gushed volumes of verbal bile. Some were veiled in their

prejudice, others not so much: "Let's show these bearded goat-herders that we run this country, not them ... Spread the word and come ready for a battle for our rights and our land"iii. Moderate Muslims rushed to condemn the violence on behalf of the majority of 'good Aussie Muslims', appeasing a public with no patience for an alternative framing of the issue. Press conferences were staged with senior police and Muslim leaders, and the virtues of compliance and working with police were extolled. Politicians later celebrated the fact that there were no further protests in Sydney. Things had returned to the way 'we' like it, albeit with a new example of how not to be 'Australian' now circulating through the mix.

On reflection it is disappointing but not surprising that accounts of this event are pervaded with Howard's rhetoric; his influence is but a reworked version of a long standing condition. In this climate, Malcolm X's warning seems appropriate: "If you're not careful, the newspapers will have you hating the people who are being oppressed, and loving the people who are doing the oppressing". The actual content of the protest puts this to the test: what do we do when the media-state alliance attacks a group that probably includes authoritarian ideologues? A first and obvious response is to strike back at the dominant discourse by refusing received distinctions, such as between 'criminal extremists' and 'good Aussies', recognising that a simple inversion of these categories still pivots on a binary that is set in place by the media. This matters because, in a system of asymmetrical power relations, the dominant dominate the ability to speak and will tend to empower the voices that sustain the status quo. Hence why Veiszadeh and others were expected to confirm the liberal consensus that racialised violence in Australia was an unjustifiable aberration.

The act of drawing our own lines of political distinction should be something more active than armchair analysis (which is what this article is). Here I am only really laying out what I see as the logic of the media coverage of the protests rather than offering a concrete proposal for dismantling the forms of racism that may be at play. This is partly because, on this issue, I am not yet in position to know how to do this. My thoughts on becoming an good ally however would involve listening to, learning from, and working with those who are finding their own ways of acting against systematic racism, exploitation, harassment, and authoritarian violence – assuming that those who experience these effects are in the best position to know how to resist them.

- Matt Kiem



ON THE VALUE OF DOING HOMEWORK

By James Pollard.

A brief survey of the recent, globalised student revolts demonstrates three approaches to the formation of demands. The first approach has been to propose no demands beyond immediate anarchist-communist revolution, such as the New York-based Institute for Experimental Freedom, parts of California's communisation current, and the Chilean *Grupo de Esclarecimiento Communista*. While I have some sympathy for the statements issued by these groups, too often their movements have seemed to begin and end in communism as an immediate and permanent carnival (when I tried that, I woke up with no money and a massive hangover). The second approach, including scholars such as Stanley Aronowitz, attempts to practice militant but traditional unionism on the university campuses, combatting traditionally understood exploitation in the form of casualisation, increased workloads, and declining pay. I support these demands, and have previously addressed the example of La Trobe university in *Direct Action* (Winter 2012 issue, available online at http://dawobblies.wordpress.com/ – eds), but sometimes this kind of program is limited by its generality. My subject here is a third approach to demands in education, which is the demand for education plain and simple. Notable here is the International Student Movement online platform, which has been a tool in coordinating student strikes between North America and Europe, and calls for "an emancipatory education for all." Yet beyond a nice-sounding adjective, there is little content to this demand. Unqualified demands for education are in danger of receiving more neoliberal answers, such as George W. Bush's No Child Left Behind, or Gillard's imitation of it in this country, which answer the demand with more testing, and higher penalties for schools which fail the tests. While an emancipation would be nice, we will not find it in the university unless we can develop a critique of its practices of teaching, learning, and research.

Since Marxism is the science of the rebel worker, then let us start with a testable hypothesis: alienation. Alienation is defined by Marx as the internal split between a worker with their many capacities and the limitations of their labour. In alienated labour, the worker does not experience their physical, mental, and emotional powers as their own. Rather, their powers act as though directed by an external agency. To the organisational principle of this apparent agency, we give the name capital. So, to take an old-fashioned example, a worker on an assembly line has no personal invesment in the movements of their hands; rather, their hands move in response to a series of external commands which are enforced

by disciplinary violence. The result is that the worker does not create from their own desires, but instead encounters their creative powers as the intrusion of an outside force. In Marx's words from the essay on estranged labour:

> The worker puts his life into the object; but now his life no longer belongs to him but to the object. Hence, the greater this activity, the more the worker lacks objects. Whatever the product of his labor is, he is not. Therefore, the greater this product, the less is he himself. The *alienation* of the worker in his product means not only that his labor becomes an object, an *external* existence, but that it exists *outside him*, independently, as something alien to him, and that it becomes a power on its own confronting him. It means that the life which he has conferred on the object confronts him as something hostile and alien.

This is a hypothesis which any worker can test with their own experience; collective experience confirms it to the extent that we are prepared to call exploitation and the alienation of labour a law of capitalist economy.

In *Marx Beyond Marx*, Negri traces the progession of this subjective tendency in Marx through his work in the *Grundrisse*. Negri argues that Marx shows how money is able to mediate between workers and their labour: only the wage calls them to work and keeps them there, only the wage allows them access to the products of their collective labours, and it is the insufficiency of the wage which explains the owner's control of the means of production. Negri writes:

> Money has the advantage of presenting me immediately the lurid face of the social relation of value; it shows me value right away as exchange, commanded and organized for exploitation. I do not need to plunge into Hegelianism in order to discover the double face of the commodity, of value: money has only one face, that of the boss.

In other words, the consciousness of alienation requires unmasking the fetishistic role of money in our social relationships. But as movements contemporary to Negri argued, the demystification of fetishised social relations is a task throughout the social field. The feminist movement of the 60s and 70s, for instance, showed how the family provided a harmonious-sounding ideological cover for the alienation of women's reproductive labour and their exploitation by men. These considerations, particulary the methodological commitment to collective verifiability, have strongly impacted the critique of the university which follows.

The enrolment process to the university is meant to be determined by a student's academic merit. Apart from quibbles about compensating for disadvantage, or about the best way to measure merit, or about the best way to provide it for those who lack it, there is little discontent with the concept. Yet the concept of merit, as a measurable attribute of students, is a product of several institutions, particularly standardised testing. Testing, particularly English-only testing as is increasingly the norm in Australia, America, and the

UK, tends to be selective on the basis of class and racial background. The English which is tested for reflects the worldview and linguistic universe of the test writers, overwhelmingly well-off white people. This is why well-off white children tend to get the best test results. Undoubtedly this measure correlates to some extent with the presence or absence of certain useful skills (I like knowing the difference between who and whom and occasionally it matters!). However, the ideological short-circuit is the identification of this measure with fitness for university life. A second-generation migrant child might score lower on English comprehension, but growing up often forces these children to develop linguistic capacities in a wide variety of settings (school, home, work, etc). Without wishing to romanticise, a migrant's child is rich in certain experiences which their Anglo-Australian classmates would not have. The reverse is obviously true, that Anglo kids also have unique experiences. But whereas during the upbringing of the Anglo child state assessments tend to confirm his or her cultural outlook and linguistic expression as true knowledge, migrant kids' experiences are devalued. They are not merely rated poorly (Vietnamese pop is worth 1/3 of Australian country; Arabic poetry is worth 1/10 of Kipling...) they are not counted at all. Testing therefore accomplishes two layers of seperation. First, it alienates those who fail tests from the possibility of critical thought by instructing them, with masses of incomprehensible scientific evidence, that they don't have the knowledge to begin to think. Second, by informing the university admissions process, it bars this subaltern population from the resources possessed by the university: books and journals, computers and other equipment, and state-of-the-art spaces for debate and collaborative work, all secured with physical and electronic locks and barriers. The recent events on a Queensland university campus, where several non-students organising a stall against the LNP were confronted by security before being arrested by police, demonstrate the extent the university will go to to enforce this sacralised exclusion. It is likely that something will be made of this rather blunt act of exclusion, but little is made of the far more massive exclusion of communities from the vast collections of resources which occupy their best real estate. To take but one example, in an effort to respond to community need, La Trobe university, even after the proposed cuts, will offer a course in Mediterranean studies. If a supermarket wanted to appear community-friendly, it would probably have to do more than offer some products the community might want to buy. Yet no one expects La Trobe to offer anything to members of the community who are not enrolled; customer service is cheaper than charity.

'Little is made of the far more massive exclusion of communities from the vast collections of resources which occupy their best real estate.'

Recently, protestors at La Trobe bore placards opposing the cuts and defending "student choice," unfortunately unaware, perhaps, that this has been the rallying cry of neoliberal education reform. Students are free to choose their university, their degree, and their elective courses, but some conditions apply. We are sold a magical transformation: that we can evolve, like Pokémon, into the holders of arts degrees or doctorates. Possession of these shamefully obvious fetishes is purported to distinguish higher levels of understanding and knowledge. But as every student knows, wild, transformative flashes of insight tend to happen outside of the bounds of regular study. Study itself appears as an undifferentiated slog through the curriculum. The curriculum is the set of all of the facts one must memorise, the papers one must read, and the formulas one must fulfil in one's writing. The regularity of this progression is enforced through through the same surveillance measures as in schools: hierarchical ranking of both students and their teachers. These surveillance measures tend to reduce the creative act to imitation. Students are not expected to create knowledge, but instead to replicate it. Teachers are required only to transmit. Under these conditions, both students and tutors are hard-pressed to practice education as a creative encoutner between those who might have different experiences, but have equal right to speak them. Whether a university's offered curriculum is narrow or broad, one's "choice" in learning is determined in advance.

On graduation, most degree-holders are smart enough to flee the university in search of something more fulfilling, like making lattes or clear-cutting the Amazon. For a select few, however, academia opens its doors, where one is supposed to produce knowledge with the same mechanical efficiency as the former arts student who makes one's coffees.

'[I n academia], one is supposed to produce knowledge with the same mechanical efficiency as the former arts student who makes one's coffees.'

Proven academic researchers tend to demand great respect in public fora, and university research is always considered the highest standard for things being facts. But within academia it is an open secret that the value of research has been conflated with the number of one's publications in reputable journals (i.e. not this one). Researchers need high ratings to keep their jobs, so they need to publish as much and as quickly as possible. This doesn't translate into bold exploration of new questions. Priority tends to go towards justifying government policy, developing new products to be sold by private corporations, or improving techniques of management and control. Researchers are rewarded less for producing knowledge in connection with and at the service of the community, but more for inflating their publication count: conservative research projects are chosen, the results are split into as many publications as possible, and as many

authors will try to claim credit regardless of their actual work on a project. Projects which do not excite funders' interest, or are too tenuous to guarantee publishable results, or are too heterodox to publish results anyway, are all penalised. Well-meaning researchers generally have to accept the separation between their work and their lives.

As we have progressed through our analysis of the university, we have come across a series of barriers, excluding certain people, practices, and ideas from the space of the university. Behind all of these walls, in the hallowed sanctuary of tenured academics, we are told there lies real knowledge and understanding. But knowledge as I understand it, basing my understanding on Paulo Freire's thesis of education as dialogue, does not reside behind walls; it goes there to die. Knowledge is real when it is born through the common reflection on shared experiences with the view to transforming one's reality. This is what one must assume the International Student Movement means when it calls for "emancipatory education." Yet what could be emancipating about demanding more education if it just means slightly different admisssion targets, or a different set of texts to internalise? The university's emancipatory potential can only be realised if these measures of surveillance are disabled. Therefore I propose demands for education which sound paradoxically like demands for less education: we must mobilise against testing, against metrics of "quality assurance" in teaching and research, and a liberation from grading which will mean a student's choice of study can finally extend to include the world they live in, and the possibilities contained therein.

Suggested readings:

Karl Marx. "Estranged Labour."
Paulo Freire. "Pedagogy of the Oppressed."
Antonio Negri. "Marx Beyond Marx: Lessons on the Grundrisse."

Author's note:

This was originally meant to be the paper I presented at this year's Historical Materialism conference in Sydney, but that was not to be for two reasons. First, I delivered that presentation from only the sketchiest of notes. Second, based on the conversations and feedback I got at the conference, I wanted to somewhat alter my message, specifically to focus on the issues of demands and organisation which were of particular concern at the conference. *Many thanks are due to all who shared knowledge, conversations, and criticisms with me. Particular thanks are due to Maya and my mum for proof-reading drafts. Incredible thanks are due to Tim Briedis for his tireless work as editor through a series of drafts which went over the deadline.*

Anarchists against the Wall/Jews against the Occupation interview

At the end of May, Syzygy from Mutiny Zine caught up with three activists involved in struggles around Israel/ Palestine - Inbal from Anarchists against the Wall (in Israel) and Jem and Sarah from Jews against the Occupation Melbourne. Information about Anarchists against the Wall can be found at http://www.awalls.org/. The interview is below.

Syzygy: Could you give us a quick overview of what Anarchists against the Wall is and how it started?

Inbal: I was not there when Anarchists against the Wall started, I joined about 5-6 years ago. It formed as a group in the Second Intifada about 7-8 years ago. There were a few differences in it from what was going on in the activist and anarchist scene in Israel. It was centred around the idea of 'joint struggle'. This is very important. Most of the Zionist left was organising mass rallies in Tel Aviv, which for most Palestinians was closed - they couldn't get to Tel Aviv! So the Zionist left was rallying in the street and Palestinians were doing whatever they were doing. Opposed to this was 'joint struggle'. This was going to the West Bank, meeting with the people, understanding what they want, what they think the struggle should be and how it should be conducted, trying to find ways to co-operate with us and from then seeing how we can work together.

A second thing that was important was that it was a really anarchist group, so the way it worked was without hierarchies and with consensus decision-making, which is quite different to most of the Zionist left organisations. They have very specific hierarchies.

The third thing was direct action, understanding that the process of organising mass rallies and trying to attract the Israeli public was not effective. I think this is why the name Anarchists against the Wall or against Fences was chosen, because the first action was actually going and cutting those fences. Another thing that was different, I don't know if this was deliberate, is that the anarchists were not working a lot within Israeli society. We are willing to work with whoever is willing to work with us, but we don't necessarily put the Israeli people first. Most of the influence we have had is within Palestinian society and the Popular Committees (in Palestine), at the Wall, and in calling the outside community to start helping the struggle.

Syzygy: My impression is that it's one of the largest (if only) groups in the far-left in Israel. Can you give us a sense of the number of people involved?

Inbal: I think that the number of really active people is around 50-60, who are active on a weekly basis, though it's hard to say as a lot of people burn out very quickly. Maybe another 300 support us and will sometimes come to actions that we organise. So it's a very small group. There are some other radical groups that are doing work, like around agriculture and in the villages, around ideas of Israeli-Palestinian joint struggle, but they are very small as well. And there's the Sheikh Jarrah solidarity movement, a lot of the anarchists say they are not radical enough, but I think it is important. This group started working on the principles of 'joint struggle' but mostly in East Jerusalem, because most of them are from there. Unlike the anarchists they would try to appeal to the mainstream public, and they had some success in this. A lot of people who were coming to their rallies started coming to the West Bank which is a small step.

Syzygy: Related to the way in which anarchists can choose not to engage with stuff that they don't consider radical enough, is the question of how to relate to national liberation struggles. Some anarchists can be quite dismissive of any kind of participation in these struggles, for instance because they see them as legitimising and producing another form of hierarchy. Obviously this comes up in the Palestinian case. Maybe you can talk about some of the obstacles posed by the need to relate to such a struggle, and how to work with people who have very different goals?

Inbal: The thing is I'm an anarchist, I would like there to be no state solution. I think the way we are working with Popular Comittees in Palestine is very anarchistic, with open committees that organise the struggle inside each village with the people themselves. But we should be careful in going to people living under oppression, that have no rights, and saying to them 'you want a state, and states are bad'. It's like when rich people go to poor people and lecture them about how they should live their lives. So as I look at it, I have no problem with holding the Palestinian flag, there's no state – yet. But the minute there is one I will probably have a problem with it. And I think that we need to try and have partners in the Popular Struggle who have similar feelings that we have. And I suppose a lot of them might co-operate with us in the future to try and achieve a 'no state solution'.

Syzygy: I think that this question of radicals being paternalistic, for instance in saying to Palestinians that you can't have a state, also relates to the issue of how to work with others when you're the coloniser. So I've been told that Palestinian activists will ask Israelis to stay out of certain cities and areas, so they can have some spaces for themselves as much as possible. How do you negotiate this issue?

Inbal: This is less strong in the villages we work in but stronger in the big cities. The problem was started during the eighties and nineties when there was a huge movement of activists trying to go and talk to Palestinians and have a dialogue about 'peace', while portraying the situation as equal, even though it wasn't equal. And all these talks brought us nothing, and in some ways lead to the disaster of the Oslo agreement.

لاسلطويون ضد الجدار
אנרכיסטים נגד הגדר
ANARCHISTS AGAINST THE WALL

This whole way of thinking, colonialist, patronising in some ways, believing that 'we will give them the state' ended up with an agreement that was a disaster for Palestinians. So I think a lot of the Palestinians, at least those that I've met, have had enough of this (of dialogue with Israelis – eds). And I can understand this.

The second issue is economic exploitation. For years Israelis and Israel were exploiting the weakness of the Palestinian economy, going and buying cheap stuff in the big cities, having workers from Palestine and paying them really low wages. So these kind of visits (by 'peace' activists and by people there for economic reasons – eds) are not welcome any more in many parts of Palestine, and I think they are right. They don't want tourists to come and exploit their economic weaknesses; they don't want tourists to come with Orientalist behaviour. These visits help legitimise the occupation, because they allow Israel to pretend that is 'democratic', that it allows attempts at 'peace projects' – that do nothing!

Syzygy: So this discussion of how colonialism extends beyond the military occupation also relates to the idea of a 'two-state solution', which some Zionists support. Maybe you can outline some of the problems with it?

Inbal: One problem with the two-state solution is that it simply cannot happen! Everyone should just open a map and see the way settlements are built in the West Bank and the way that the Oslo Agreement fragments it. Just look at what's happening in Jerusalem and East Jerusalem. It's like a puzzle of (Israeli) settlements intertwined with Palestinian areas. So I think that it's not possible any more.

But the deepest problem is the basic thinking that is behind it. What the Zionist left is saying is that they support a Jewish state, a state that is based on racism. You should understand that the discrimination against non-Jewish people doesn't end at the West Bank and Gaza, the 1.5 million Palestinians inside Israel are being discriminated against, whether they lived there to begin with or are migrant workers or refugees. Just a couple of days ago (at the end of May, when this interview was conducted – eds) there was rioting in the streets of Tel Aviv, breaking the windows of shops owned by immigrants. There is a really high level of racism. Even very leftish Zionists will say to you 'We can't live with the Palestinians, we do not have the same culture', and all these nice words that conceal real racism, and thinking that accepts segregation. If you want a one-state solution, they argue that Jews will not be the majority in Israel. The Zionist left is using demography to scare the other Israelis, saying to them there is 'gonna be a majority of Palestinians'.

Syzygy: Maybe you could also talk about the effectiveness of Zionist ideology and how that's taken root in Israel?

Inbal: Israel has a whole machine of brainwashing. The schools in Israel are terrible, you are not taught history. I think until the last two years most of the Israeli population did not know what Nakba means (it means 'catastrophe' and refers to the displacement of 700,000 Palestinians following the 1948 Palestine War that lead to Israel's independence - eds). Only until Lieberman's party (the neo-fascist 'Israel is our Home' party, the 3rd biggest one in Israel – eds) proposed a law to ban all teaching about the Nakba, did Israelis begin to learn what this word refers to and means. The schools are all very militaristic. You get soldiers coming to give lectures in schools. All the holidays reinforce this militaristic narrative – for instance in the Holocaust day, the Holocaust is recruited for nationalism, with not a word about human rights, racism, fascism. Nothing. Everyone tried to kill us, and this is why we need Israel!

Syzygy: We talked before the interview about the similar level of indoctrination that you said happens in Jewish schools in Australia, or at least a comparable kind. Perhaps you could talk about this?

Jem: Yeah, definitely. I grew up in Melbourne and I went to a Zionist school. I think the strength of Zionist indoctrination is that it conflates Zionism and Judaism. So history is rewritten according to that. So Jewish history becomes the progression of Zionism. There is very little talk of alternative ways of being Jewish, you learn Hebrew instead of Yiddish, that kind of thing. Until after WW2 Zionism wasn't very popular among Jewish communities. Even my grandmother who was a Holocaust survivor, and was very religious, was anti-Zionist. Only after WW2 when the Zionists said 'this proves that the Jews need to go to this land', did Zionism really kick off.

Conflating Zionism and Judaism means that any kind of anti-Israel sentiment becomes anti-Semitism. There is a real history of anti-Semitism, and Jews are aware of this through learning about the Holocaust and the history of persecution. But because there's no disconnect between the Zionist movement and Judaism, any anti-Israel criticism becomes anti-Semitic.

A point of vulnerability is that the Jewish community is one that has experienced real oppression. There are points of comparison that you can make; between Jews and Palestinians, or between the history of Jews as refugees and the way in which refugees in Israel are mistreated today. So that helps keep me optimistic.

Sarah: I grew up in Canada and had a very similar upbringing to Jem. Even beyond what she said, Zionism is so pervasive that it's just the norm. You don't even know that you have a political standpoint because of this normalisation. Fear is pumped into you – 'we need Israel, because otherwise the Holocaust can happen again, we need to have strength in Judaism'. The way they use fear is really intense.

Syzygy: Great, thanks for sharing those experiences. To finish off, you could talk about your solidarity activism in Australia?

Jem: We decided to come together as Jews in this collective because we recognise the way in which our voices are appropriated in order to justify the state of Israel – they say that 'Jews think there should be a place where we can be safe, so therefore we need Israel'. As I became more critical of Zionism I noticed that there was no voice in my own community in Melbourne saying that 'I won't allow my identity as a Jew, my family's history to justify racism, the oppression of an entire other people'. So there's a role to play within our community.

Another reason is that a lot of anti-Israel resistance is met with accusations of anti-Semitism. As crappy as this is, it's much harder to claim that our Jewish group is anti-Semitic!

Syzygy: Maybe you could summarise what your group is doing at the moment?

Sarah: We teamed up with the people who did the leaflet 'No Pride in a Police State' (available in Mutiny 64 – eds) and did a pamphlet called 'No Pride in Apartheid'. This went against the pinkwashing used by Israel, that proclaims that it is the gay Mecca of the Middle East, the only place in the Middle East that you can be openly gay, in opposition to these backward, barbaric Arab states. We put out a pamphlet saying that we don't want our queer voices appropriated in order to support the Israeli state. The major thing that we've been doing is trying to revoke the charity status of the Jewish National Fund (JNF). They have tax exemption here as a result. The JNF is a worldwide organisation that claims to revitalise and develop areas of Israel for forests, parks, new green spaces. It greenwashes the apartheid. They're a very rich organisation – they collect money from all over the world in order to plant trees, forests, etc and it's often over the ruins of Palestinian villages, and they dispossess Palestinians of their land in order to do so as well. Within their charter they're only allowed to develop and sell land to Jews, so they're an inherently racist organisation.

Jem: They're in the process now of trying to develop a recreation park in the middle of the desert of Israel. This is where Bedouins live – who are actually citizens of Israel. They're being moved from their unrecognised villages to other villages when they don't actually want to move. 30,000 people are being affected. So we're working on a campaign to revoke their tax exempt status, and create awareness about their practices.

Syzygy: Thanks heaps for your time!

anarchist & radical publications directory

WEBSITES

Anarchy.org.au

Your online source for Anarchy in Australia. Currently administered by the Melbourne Anarchist Club.

http://disaccords.wordpress.com/

An anarchist news blotter following events in Australia & Indonesia (& other nearby places). Email noisland@riseup.net with links & recommendations.

PUBLICATIONS

Avenue

unnamedavenue.org

Zine of Perth anarchist collective, three issues available. Contact avenue.perth@gmail.com

Direct action

https://dawobblies.wordpress.com/

The voice of revolutionary unionism! Direct Action is the publication of the Industrial Workers of the World - Australian Regional Organising Committee. Winter 2012 edition now available.

The Wolves at the door

http://wolvesatthedoor.noblogs.org/

Irregular anarchist journal from Sydney. Issue #2 is now available. Contact thewolvesatthedoor@riseup.net.

Black Light

http://anarchy.org.au/anarchist-texts/black_light_1/

Paper of the Melbourne Anarchist Club. Issue #1 'Anarchy and organisation' is now available. Contact blacklightzine@gmail.com.

Brisbane From Below

http://brissol.wordpress.com/2011/06/22/from-below-volume-1/

Paper of Brisbane Solidarity Network. BSN 'are a network of disgruntled workers, out-of-workers and students who organise to contribute towards a non-hierarchical solidarity movement...' Visit the BSN website at http://www.solnet.co.nr.

Sedition

http://anarchy.org.au/sedition/

Sedition is a mutual collaboration between three geographically disparate Australian anarchist collectives; Melbourne Anarchist Club, the Jura collective from Sydney, and Organise!– the Adelaide anarchist communist group. Contact: seditionjournal@gmail.com.

The Spectre/El Fantasma

http://spectrenewsletter.wordpress.com/

Monthly Newspaper of the International Co-ordination Against Multinational Policies (Observatorio Internacional Contra las Políticas de las Multinacionales).